MURRAYFIELD

(You're Having a Laugh)

by

Irvine Welsh

Chapter One

It was a glorious hot summers day. Doreen Gow was chopping up spring onions as the tiger nosed into the kitchen. She was aware of its mass from the corner of her weeping eye but at first thought that it was Ross, the neighbours large crossbreed dog, who often came in while she was cooking.
--" I've nothing for ye pal" she began, then she turned and faced the animal. It stopped about a foot from her and looked straight at her, almost petulant in its regard. It had blood staining its white fur around its bottom jaw. Doreen turned back to the chopping board, felt the knife in her grip, considered the futility of it and just shut her eyes and waited for her life to end. For some reason, she thought of her ex husband Callum, who'd walked out on her two years ago. She wondered how he'd react when he learned she'd been mauled to death by a tiger. Then an almost silent prayer came into her head in an insistent whisper: as if somebody else was saying it on her behalf. The big cat, after a cursory sniff at the back of her bare leg, turned away and ambled back out through the kitchen door.
Doreen had felt its hot breath on the skin at the back of her knees, then heard the pads on the back of its feet bomp and its claws click across the tiled floor of the kitchen. It sounded like a dog rather than a cat. Was she seeing things, hallucinating in the heat? No, she turned around to see the tigers hackles move up slowly, languidly as it exited the room. Doreen followed almost robotically, like she was a crude mechanical device created to simulate the tigers ambling stride, and pushed the sliding door shut. From behind its frosted glass she could see the animal as it bounded up the stairs. It seemed as if her hall carpet was ripping under its claws.
That tiger needs to get its claws cut, she said. That's terrible, my good carpet.
Doreen looked out the window to her well stocked patio garden. It wasn't the biggest in the neighbourhood, but she kept it tidy with various shrubs, potted plants and climbing roses. It was a balmy, hazy day and she struggled to focus in the shimmering light. She noted that her garden shed needed a new coat of creosote. On the Yellow-Green lawn next door, she saw a familiar brown mound, but it was streaked with blood and completely motionless. The tiger had got Ross, and she hadn't heard a thing. Doreen picked up the phone book and dialled Edinburgh Zoo. A girls voice came on the other end of the line.
--Edinburgh Zoo-hoo
--Do youse have a Tiger that's escaped? Cause I've got one here, Doreen said, lighting up a cigarette. She'd stopped for a few months but had put on too much weight as a result. The Benson & Hedges diet was the only thing that helped; only a cigarette could stop her pigging out on snacks. Thank god that tiger had just feasted on Ross, and had a full belly, otherwise it might have gone for her.
--"We'll just check" the girl on reception said.
Doreen waited by the phone for a couple of minutes before the girl came back on.
--"I'm really sorry, but I'm no sure who tae ask" the lassie told her.
--"aw"

--“Its just that I’ve only just started and Gillian’s away on her lunch brek n Yvonne’s oaf ill. Its jist that I’ve been telt no tae leave this office” the receptionist explained “Mibee Mr. McGinlay would ken but he’s no due back till later oan this afternoon”
--“aw”
-- “Ah ken ye’l think ahm daft…”
It was obviously the young lassies first job. Its no really fair to burden a kid with this,Doreen considered.
-- “Dinnae worry aboot that hen" Doreen reassured her “Ahl jist phone the polis.”
--“Aye n ahl ask around here” the girl said. Doreen left her number then hung up. She went to dial the police then thought twice, remembering when she was with her friend Rena at Jenners, and they met this guy on Princes Street handing out pamphlets. One had informed her that there were only 400 Bengal tigers left in the wild and Doreen worried about the police recklessly shooting the animal, just as they had shot an innocent man a wee while back, down in Suffolk, or was it Sussex? Anyway, that blind chap, used to be the home secretary, he had condemned them. Condemned them for their lack of vision, Doreen thought with a nervous mischief, her sides slowly shaking in tense laughter. But what would the police do to the animal? No quarter would be given. And there might be no need. That Ross, well he might have had a go, provoked the tiger.
And it was a majestic beast right enough.
No, instead she called Rena, first at home where she got the answer phone, then on her mobile. Her friend immediately confirmed her own instincts, saying that Doreen should keep the police out of it, try the zoo again and ask to speak to someone in charge. She was indignant about it, but then Rena was a real animal lover.
--I’ll be round later. Its only that I’m at Samanthas now and I’m just about to go under the dryer.
Again, Doreen thought. No bad for lady muck. Mind you, it was probably a corrective measure as they’d made a mess of it the other week. Not that Doreen had said as much to Rena cause she’d at least professed to be happy with it, but that lassie never suited a fringe. Never in a million years.

Chapter Two

Like many postmen of his generation, Malcolm Forbes, a tall gangly man with long thinning frizzy blond hair, and big, bulging eyes, was a bit of a stoner. Malcolm knew he shouldn't be having a blow on the job, but fuck it, it was a beautiful, baking hot day and he was down the disused railway line, now a cycle path, well away from prying eyes as he skinned up a big joint of Temple-ball. The mail bag was heavy and his light blue post office issue shirt was dark with sweat under his armpits and down his back.
Fuck it, you need a break.
By the time Malcolm emerged from the banked path, and the camouflage of trees and shrubbery, and stumbled onto the street, he was pretty stoned. Sauntering down the road with his bag now feeling considerably lighter, he only snapped out of his trance when he realised he was at Mrs Jardines house. A shudder of caution shook him through his haze. That dug Ross didn't seem to be around; it had bit him once before. He gingerly turned down the garden path and stuck a couple of letters through the box.
Emboldened by the dope and the lack of canine presence, Malcolm decided that his tormentor was either out, or better still, tied up to the back post. If so, he'd wind the bastard up. He tiptoed down the side lane to the back in order to check.
When he got round to the back garden, the first thing he saw was a big tiger. It must have been about seven feet long. It was lying on its side on the lawn, reclining in the sun.

-- Wow. Malcolm said. He looked at the mangled and chewed corpse beside it. It had got Ross. Ross was a big dog, a crossbreed, but evidently no match for the huge cat. Was a tiger really a cat as such? Malcolm doubted it. He'd once owned a cat. Squeedgie. Squeedgie the weedgie he'd called it, as he'd bought it from that Glaswegian window-cleaner boy who drank in the Roseburn bar. But Squeedgie was nowt like this thing. Anyway, however you looked at it, Ross had got his.

-- Wow. Malcolm said again, turning slowly and beating a retreat down the path by the side of the house. As he was going out the front gate, still looking cautiously behind him, Mrs Jardine was approaching. He turned to face her small, frail figure. Despite the intesnse heat, she wore a substantial jacket and her face was pinched as if she was cold.
-- Hello son. Any post?
--Just stuck a couple of things through the door, Malcolm said, his mouth hanging open in a smile, strangely reminding Mrs Jardine of Ross. She'd got a nice bone from Mr Hall the butcher at Roseburn. She was surprised that Ross wasn't barking, he could usually smell something like this a mile away.
-- Only I'm expecting an invitation to my friends Golden wedding anniversary, she informed him, beaming a little. Mrs Jardine was exited at the prospect of getting together with some of her old acquaintances.
-- That's nice…. Is that, like, Twenty years or what? Malcolm asked

-- Mrs Jardine laughed at him – No son, not at all, its Fifty.
Malcolm nodded thoughtfully. – A long time to be married he told her. Fuck me! He'd been married for fifteen months and that was long enough.
-- It is that. Mrs Jardine conceded, thinking sadly that it would have been better if she a wee it more time with Crawford. Still, he'd drooled, pished the bed and talked so much shite at the end, his eventual demise came as a relief. It was sad, but on balance the two years of dementia stuck in her head more than the near forty years of marital bliss. Such melancholy thoughts, she pondered. Maybe it was just the age she was at. Still, at least she had Ross.
-- Oh, Malcolm said, his thoughts hazy and disconnected, that temple ball was some smoke right enough!
-- I nearly forgot. Maybe you'd better watch. There's a tiger in the back garden.
Unfortunately it got Ross.
-- What do you mean, it got Ross? What are you on about laddie, Mrs Jardine half-laughed.
-- Eh…..Malcolm hesitated. They were trying to sack you for anything these days. He wasn't trained as a bereavement counsellor or anything like that. Aye, they were just waiting to trip you up. Wee Russell, nice wee guy, caught on CCTV doing a bit of shouting at the football and they'd sacked him for being a hooligan. No, he'd said enough already. – I'm no really sure. But the best thing to do might be to phone the mail people. At the depot likes.
-- But…..but….Mrs Jardine stammered incomprehensibly and irritably. – Ah cannae see how the mail affects Ross. What's aw this aboot a tiger? Yir daft laddie, jist plain daft!
-- I have to go, Malcolm said, departing with haste.
That boy was on drugs, Mrs Jardine thought. Its no good, not at all. She wasn't going to clipe on the laddie, not with jobs being what they were, maybe she would write to the *Scotsman*, just to make a general point. The post was obviously going the same way as the railways. It had taken her daughter Elisabeth Eight hours to get up by train from London the other week. The rot had to be stopped. This drugs business worried her. It was even here now in Murrayfield. The world was going crazy. They were even talking about having Football here now, at the Rugby stadium! The Rugby crowd itself was bad enough these days, far removed from the gentlemen of old. And now we were being expected to put up with casual yobs every other week, and even worse, *Glaswegians* coming through. That meant foul language, bottles of cheap wine and public urination in the streets and in the gardens.
That was bad enough, but the drugs were worse. They seemed to get everywhere. It was probably thanks to that nyaff across the back, he'd bought his house – a lovely big house – on drugs money. You could tell; the tattoos, the jewellery, the fancy clothes and big car. And all those noisy people who came round. The language. And it was like a fortress since he'd built that big wall, you couldn't even see into his garden now. A house of ill-repute if ever there was. Oh aye, he was nice enough at first, always let on, said "good morning". But then he was shown in his true colours, cursing and swearing when Ross bested his Pitbull. An ugly nasty thing it was, but Ross saw it off. Aye, he didnae half!
Then the pitbull had gone and attacked a lassie from the school and had been put down. It wasn't the animals fault of course: they were only as good or as bad as their owners. Aye, it

was the likes of that nyaff from the council scheme who should be put down, Mrs Jardine thought with some satisfaction. That would teach them to look after their pets.
But it was funny Ross wasn't making a fuss, he must have heard her coming back.

Rossy…Rossy….As she went round the back of the house, Mrs Jardine screamed in horror as she saw the remains of her dog. He had been torn to shreds. She couldn't believe it. What was it that post fool had said about a tiger? She looked around but there was no sign of any damn tiger or anything else.

Ross, she sobbed. That bastard. That monster on the post! The drugs had got to him, warped his brain and he'd destroyed Ross in a frenzied attack. Aye, he'd complained about Ross before, and this was the result of his twisted anger. Mrs Jardine hobbled into the house and called the Post Office.
Tore your dog apart you say? The depot supervisor Bill Niven scoffed. – Our Malcolm. Come on missus. That laddie wudnae hurt a fly.
- But…but….but …. Mrs Jardine sputtered.
The door went and she slammed the phone down. She went through to answer it and it was Doreen Gow from next door in a state of panic.
- Can I come in? Doreen asked.
- Well, its no a good time, Mrs Jardine sobbed. – Its Ross….
- the tiger got him, Doreen squealed, its oot here. I need te come in! and she pushed past Mrs Jardine and slammed the door shut. Mrs Jardine was affronted. This woman was evidently as crazed as that murdering postie bastard, perhaps even more. She had always regarded Doreen as a flighty one with a wanton streak, but shed never expected anything like this from her. It just went to show.
- Did thon postman laddie gie you anything? Mrs Jardine enquired of Doreen. Aye, the bloody harlot was obviously demented on drugs.
Doreen looked wildly at her. There *was* the package from Tupperware.
- He brought me something, she said.
Mrs Jardine looked at the woman in disgust
- And you just took it, she spat.
- Aye. Aye I did, Doreen said, wondering what was wrong with her neighbour. The old bitch is going senile, she thought.
Mrs Jardine looked harshly at her. This harlot was as bold as brass. Parties, noise, no wonder her husband had gone. She'd obviously been at it with the postman. Maybe poor Ross had disturbed their drug fuelled orgy and they'd spitefully poisoned him and in deranged bloodlust had carved him up, torn him apart with power tools. Mrs Jardine glanced out the back window into Doreens garden.
The door on her shed was open!
The old woman looked harshly at her neighbour and took a step backwards.
- Look, Doreen tried to explain, there was a tiger. It escaped from the zoo, I think. It got Ross, I'm sorry.

- Ah know hes gone, Mrs Jardine sobbed before turning on Doreen – Aye, and it suits you doesn't it? It bloody well suits you awright!
- what dae ye mean?
- Bloody tiger nonsense. You and thon postie. Youse never liked that dog, Mrs Jardine tearfully accused.
- I fed him, Doreen retorted in a grating righteousness – Don't tell me that I never liked Ross. I fed Ross.
Her indignation was impacting on Mrs Jardine, who was starting to feel that neither Doreen nor Malcolm had killed Ross. The fight was leaving her. – But if there was an escaped tiger, you never raised the alarm. Ye let my Ross die!

Doreen Bristled again, her hands on her hips. For your information, Ross was finished off before I saw what happened. And I did try to help. I phoned the zoo straight away, she said; then, noticing Mrs Jardines pain, she adopted a more conciliatory stance and tone – A nice lassie, she said shed phone back.
Aw aye, aw aye…… and whit did she say?
Doreen looked at her in guilty silence. Eventually she was moved to confess – Well, she told me to call the police. But, I never. Well, what do they know?
It was true, Mrs Jardine considered bitterly. The police had gone like the railways, like the post. There was a time when you knew at least where you stood with them, even if they weren't that good. Now it had all changed. There was even a top policeman down in London who was one of those funny fellows who loved other men and he was encouraging the blacks to smoke drugs. No wonder there was so much rape. No wonder criminals like him across the back were strutting about like peacocks when you had a bunch of Jessie's in charge of policing!
Doreen was thinking about Ross, who could be a contrary beast. – Anywey, mibbe Ross wis te blame, she said – ah mean, he must've had a go at thon big cat. It was bound te be feeling isolated and hunted. The last thing it needed wis a dug huvvin a go!
The outraged old woman snapped back at Doreen. Who was she, this drunken slut, her who brought men back at the weekend. – Ye don't know wit yer talking aboot. Ross wis tied up. Ross couldnae help it. Eh couldnae run. Eh wis mauled. Mauled te death!
Doreen was having none of it. – Aye, and whae left the dug tied up? Eh? Eh? Answer me that! Whae left poor Ross helpless? Eh?
The words thudded like arrows into Mrs Jardines chest. She looked out her window and then she saw the tiger. It was pishing against her rose bushes. – There it is. There's the bloody killer!
- Magnificent looking animal but, Doreen said with respect as she glanced over her neighbours shoulder. Mrs Jardine though, was still staring out at the beast. Something seemed to cross over in her. That thing had killed her Ross and it was just lying there, desecrating his corpse, devouring it at leisure. The spoiled body of her poor dog; the tiger had opened it up, dragged its entrails out. Before Doreen could stop her, Mrs Jardine had gone to a cupboard, picked up a broom and opened the patio door. She charged outside, screaming at the beast – You kilt Ross! Ye kilt Ross ya bloody bugger!

The tiger buckled back on its hunkers, and let out a low growl at the woman. Then it suddenly leapt, flaying Mrs Jardine in one rip across the face and neck. Doreen slammed the patio doors shut.
At least she's with Ross and Crawford now, her neighbour thought, as she watched the beast tear at the prostrate, twitching body.
Well, soon.
Trembling with fear and deeply confused, Doreen found her neighbours drink cabinet. There was only whisky. She poured a glass and took a big swallow, almost gagging on its burning sourness. The second one was better. Then she phoned the zoo, recognising the voice of the same girl on the line. – Was it you that ah phoned earlier?
- The girl seemed to recognize her. – Aw…..you're that woman, eh?
- Aye.
There was a pause for a few seconds on the line. Doreen grew impatient. – Well, that tiger, have you goat um?
- Eh, um no really sure likes, the girl admitted, what about your one, is he still loose?
- Its here…..its dangerous….its awfay, she said looking out the window. Mrs Jardines corpse lay a few feet away from Ross's. The tiger seemed to have gone. No, it was lying in the shade by the garden shed.
- Ye'd better gie's the address the girl ventured, then with sudden relief, said – Naw, speak te Gillian.
There was another pause on the line. – Hello, Gillian Forrest here. Are you the lady with the tiger.
- Aye, but its nothing te dae wi me. It just came into ma house. Its next door it really affects.
- Which one is it? Khan or Lady?
- Whit dae ye mean?
- Well, eh, its, like Khans a laddie and Lady's a lassie. Doreen was nonplussed at this. She had no experience at sexing tigers. When she and Callum got married they'd had a cat, Sally, but that was a long time ago and it was hard to tell from here. It was distressing though to watch the animal gnaw at Mrs Jardine. It had pulled her body into the shade.
- How kin ye's no check?
- What?
- How kin ye's no check?
- Well, Mr Turnbull that normally looks after the tigers is on holiday and Davey is off sick. We've definitely got one here but the other one might be gone. We're no certain but it might be hidin in the concrete enclosure. Ye cannae really see in right. And both men that work them aren't in today. There's naebody that's qualified te go intae the enclosure, see. Ah took a look and I think its lady that might be gone. She can be a bugger. Somebody did say that cage door wis open the other night, Gillian explained.
- But how's that?
There was a pause before Gillian sheepishly admitted, - Somebody forgot te lock it right. Well, ahl huv ye know, that it got Ross and Mrs Jardine.
- Is Ross the cougar?
- What?

Ross, is he the cougar?
- Aw naw, Ross is the dug. Looks like a Doberman but actually he's a cross between a German shepherd and a Rottweiler. Or I think eh is….or was.
- Aw, Gillian exclaimed, suddenly relieved. – That wis outside then, outside ay the zoo?
- Aye.
Satisfied n ow, Gillian said, - Disnae really affect us if it aw happened outside. Sorry, ah dinnae ken whit te suggest….the police maybe.
- Aw, right, Doreen said, - Cheerio then, she put the phone back down on the cradle. She supposed that the lassie had a point.

Chapter Three

Goagsie Landles and his girlfriend Mona McGovern had just returned from Texas, one of their favourite holiday jaunts. They had been stopped at airport customs in the Green channel, the only ones who were apprehended in this manner and had their luggage meticulously searched. Goagsie was charged duty on a second pair of cowboy boots he had packed away, though thankfully, not the ones he had on or the Stetson he was wearing.
Welcome hame right enough, Goagsie thought bitterly. That would be the one, a big ranch out in Texas. The Big Country right enough; freedom from interference and disapproval. No wonder that bush cunt had a ranch there. If you were Scottish, you were well in back there I the American South. A place where a proper Scottish accent carried weight, no like here in Murrayfield where the snobby, bools-in-the-mooth bastards looked down on you every time you opened your gob.
When they looked at Goagsie, all they saw was the shorn hair and the tattoos. He knew what they were thinking. That his house (biggest in the street by the way) was bought with Cocaine money, which, granted, was true, but that was his business. Luckily, he had a huge garden and had Billy coming in to feed the tiger in the large enclosure he'd built. He always worried that the authorities would be tipped off, maybe by that nosy old fucker across the back, in those smaller houses, that Mrs Jardine. She was always trying to peer o'er the wall. Nosy auld trout.
Texas. The Lone Star State. Yes sir, they'd said to Goagsie in the bars and restaurants of San Antonio and Austin. Nae difference between a Pilton buck and a Murrayfield yin oot thair. Aye, ye could sell a hoose like his and buy a decent sized ranch and ye'd still huv change for a stable ay poxy wee hoors. And huv a steak the size ay a surf board oan yer plate every day!
Aye, fuck Britain and fuck Scotland, he thought. Fuckin shitehoose full of losers. But, he lamented ruefully, he had made mistakes as well. When he had parties, Goagsie couldn't help but show off Kipling to the boys. But sometimes they'd have dopey tarts along, not lassies that knew the score, but ten-a-penny daft party chicks they'd picked up en route from some nightclub, usually Ronnie's place. Gabby as fuck, some people: you never kent who tae trust. Aye, always a problem. And Mona here…
He watched his girlfriend walk on ahead, pushing her trolley through the airport in her high heels, clad in a tight silver designer tracksuit with platinum highlights in her blonde hair. Nippy as fuck because she never got to work on her tan the second week cause the food poisoning she'd picked up at the seafood place had made her ill. It was her that wanted to go intae that mingin Mexican joint. Authentic, shed called it. It was authentically mingin and the silly cow didn't know which end to turn to the toilet all week. Goagsie hated the indignity of getting a taxi, but he was barred from driving. They loaded up the luggage and, as they were getting into the cab, Mona went over on her heels, one of them clinically slipping off. – Aw for fucks sake, she spat.

They were the Gucci ones she lied, but Goagsie felt a surge of vindication as he had told her repeatedly about the idiocy of wearing high heels whilst travelling. He said nothing but his crocodile grin spoke volumes.
- What, Mona asked, rolling down the window and spitting out her chewing gum. Goagsie relaxed back into his seat, pulled his Stetson over his eyes. – Looks like we brought some Texan weather with us, he mused contentedly.
He was looking forward to seeing Kipling again. It was the first time they had been separated in the eight months that he owned the tiger; purchased from a Romanian circus touring Britain. Fifteen grand. The boy had offered to chuck in a bride for another three grand, had even shown Goagsie a book of pictures, the lot. And he was more tempted than he'd let on. Eastern Europeans would be lighter on fuel and on maintenance than Mona. Naw, the mystic Far-east was his future though, next time he needed new fanny he was going to *Thai.*
At least George Turnbull, the keeper of the big cats at Edinburgh Zoo, had been helpful with the care of Kipling. A good lad George .Educated, but not all up himself like some of them. Shame about the ching problem. Still, that was his business. Or his and Goagsie's.
The vehicle romped along in the taxi lane into the outskirts of the city, through Corstorphine and into Murrayfield, turning into Goagsie's driveway and scrunching down the gravel path to a halt outside his front door. Goagsie pulled out the luggage and paid the driver. Mona was still sour as fuck, making a big show of hopping to the door of the house.
High heels oan a plane…..shes huvvin a fuckin laugh.
He opened the door of his home and stuck the cases inside. He shouted – Billy! But there was no sign of the fucker, he who was meant to be Kipling-sitting and house watching. An acrid pile of rage rose from Goagsie's gut, leaving a metallic taste in his mouth and forcing him to swallow hard. That unreliable cunt had probably taken off on the pish and neglected poor Kipling. Or maybe the dozy wee twat wis holed up wi some daft bit ay fanny somewhere.
See if that cunts starved ma Kipling…..
Goagsie went through the house and outside to the compound where he kept the tiger secured, and the first thing that he saw was the open gate of the cage.
Aw naw
A thousand images of Billy burned in his head, most of which involved him, a blow-torch and a set of power tools. Then, when he stepped out, he was assaulted by a pervasive stink in his nostrils and throat and he wretched violently. Somebody had got there first. There was a shapeless form on the ground. He could make out a ragged, ripped Heart of Midlothian away football strip. Mixed through it was a collection of bones. A large pool of blood had dried in the sun. Goagsie stepped closer and contemplated a torn faced skull, with both eyes still in it, looking up at him, frozen in death into an expression of dumb fear. Bluebottles buzzed and danced around the corpse, flying in and out of its mouth and ears.
Goagsie booted the head as hard as he could, wrenching it from its near-severed attachment at the neck. It smashed against the compound wall with force, rolling on a little before coming to rest with the eyes looking up at him again. – You're fuckin lucky Kipling goat te

ye first ya cunt. I wudnae huv been that easy oan ye. He stamped on the head repeatedly until it started to crush under the heels of his cowboy boots.
Mona came outside, witnessed the carnage and started screaming – What have ye done te Billy?
- It wisnae me. It wis Kipling. The daft cunt let Kipling oot!
Mona gasped in horror: - You……you're to blame for this Goagsie!
Goagsie looked pointedly at her – Have telt ye before. I dinnae like the word "blame".
- Ye never fuckin well dae when its attached tae you. You're horrible Goagsie, yev nae decency, nae remorse for poor Billy even.
That fuckin spazwit? Goagsie pointed at the strewn, defiled corpse, for the mashed head that lay next to it was no longer identifiable as Billy. – Simpleton wisnae right in the heid, wanderin around in that daft replica fitba shirt wi that daft New York Yankees hat oan like a fuckin community care case. He wis a fuckin vegetable. I'm surprised Kipling could be bothered eatin the bastard. Its natural fuckin selection: Kipling is a Top-ay-the-food-chain predator and aw he wis daein wis helping the natural order ay things by keeping prey populations like that bam Billy in check.
- Billy was meant to be your friend.
- Billy worked for me. He got fuckin careless, couldnae dae a simple task. Kipling made him pay for his mistake, the drug dealer said, suddenly misty-eyed in admiration.
Took the cunt oot good style but eh?
Well, you'll go doon for it, Goagsie. Ahm telling ye, you'll dae time for that fuckin tiger and it'll serve ye right, Mona said, heading back inside.
Aye Right! Goagsie spat. She was giving it the big one but she knew what side her bread was buttered on too much to grass him up. But that fuckin phantom Billy; now he had a chewed up corpse to dispose of. You asked folk to do a simple task. Just one simple task. But naw. Now poor Kipling would probably be in the hands of the authorities, or even dead, shot down callously by some dickhead polisman all flushed with the excitement of being allowed to use a shooter and thinking he's some SWAT team expert. They'd made him get poor Tyson put down. It was because that daft wee lassie was wearing the silly hat – that always freaked Tyson out. He was determined that he wasn't going to lose Kipling, his 430 pound five-year-old male Bengal tiger. Not after what he'd paid for him and all the expenses he'd shelled out for the animals keep.
Goagsie desperately combed the back garden, but there were few traces of Kipling. And it was difficult to work out where he'd gone. After a while though, it dawned on him that there was only one way the tiger could have got out – over the wall. If he'd climbed up onto the shed roof, he could have leapt from there onto the roof of the compound, then onto the adjoining wall and over into one of the gardens in the small bungalows behind Goagsies large villa.
Catching the whiff of tiger excrement, he found himself paraphrasing an old poem:
Tiger, Tiger burning bright

In your cage that stinks of shite
But Kipling wasn't in the cage. However, maybe it was a while ago that he'd killed Billy, then noshed back what he could of the unpalatable little bastard before heading off. Maybe he'd only left the garden recently. If so, there might be a chance to get him before the polis or those fuckwits from the council got involved!
As Goagsie strode out, he met Malcolm the postman in his driveway. – Eh, Mr Landles?
- Aye
- Goat something here for ye. Ye huv te sign for it. Recorded delivery.
- Fuck….. Goagsie gasped. He was in a hurry; he didn't need this now. He felt his jaw pulling in an involuntary yawn as if a stranger whose fist was wrapped in cotton wool had just hit him. It was the jetlag kicking in and he had to find Kipling. He grabbed the pen from the postman and signed in the boxes, chucking the package onto the doorstep.
Malcolm was about to remonstrate that he had signed his name in both boxes, when he was supposed to print it in one, but he knew that Goagsie Landles was a known face and worried that it might be taken the wrong way. He had a stoned thought following on from "don't take this the wrong way" and smirked as he considered Goagsie Landles and the tiger in a bout of rough sex. In his vision, the tiger had a striped orange and black cock and Goagsie was getting it up him…..a tiger tadger….." Don't take this the wrong way" played on a loop in his brain and he started sniggering.
- You takin the pish mate? Goagsie challenged, his gangster paranoia kicking in big time.
Aw fuck, have got masel intae deep shite now, Malcolm thought. He believed in the theory that people took drugs to make them more of what they already were. That was gangsters for you: paranoid as fuck to start with, so they probably only took cocaine as a way of justifying feeling so anxious. – Eh …ahm just a bit nervous and freaked oot man, there's a big tiger on the loose.
Goagsie's eyes bulged out as if on sticks – Show me where? He demanded, pushing the gangly postman down the path.
- Kipling! Kippers! Ma wee laddie!
They headed out and down the street, and round to Mrs Jardines house, Malcolm with his heavy bag, struggling to match the purposeful strides of the brawny, tattooed drug baron. When they got to Mrs Jardines front door, the postie refused to go any further. – You're on yer own now man, he said.
- Dinnae phone the polis right ! Goagsie threatened. For a few brief seconds he entertained the notion of adding "ya cunt" to the sentence but decided against it.
- No way man, Malcolm said, stepping back – I'm out of here. Its not my business.
- That's right mate, Goagsie nodded sternly, then winked at the departing postman. – Ahl see you awrite later on. He ventured slowly down the side of the house onto the back garden. He could only see two corpses, that of Mrs Jardine and

her crazy dug. Then he heard a tapping on glass and turned to see Doreen on the other side of the patio doors, frantically signalling at him. She pointed across the lawn behind him and he jumped round to see Kipling sitting in the shade.
On seeing Goagsie the huge beast rose and moved toward his would-be- master. After tasting Billy's salty flesh, the tough dog meat and stringy, meagre snack that was Mrs Jardine had failed to satisfy the hungry creature.
Goagsie approached as the beast moved into a crouching position. – Kippers! … Kippers! …. Down boy !……
The tiger sprang forwards, going for the chunky, six-foot-three hoodlums throat. Outraged, the gangster instinctively tried to ram the nut on the beast but only succeeded in jamming his entire head in its open jaws. Its fangs ripped through the Stetson and drove into his skull, and the tigers big claws flayed at Goagsie, who was hammering piston-like kidney punches into the animals flanks. One strong right hook snapped one of the big cats ribs. Doreen was watching in shock with Rena, who had come in through the front door.

Maybe we should get the police after all said Rena, as man and beast remain locked in combat. But the tiger was choking, waves of bile were surging up from its stomach but were stopped from being expelled by Goagsie's head and the rim of the Stetson., which was wedged in the big cats gullet. The beast tried to crush the thugs skull in its powerful jaws but Goagsie's bullet cranium held firm and the animal slowly choked, falling over and taking the still trapped outlaw with him.

Although the tiger was semi conscious and very weak by the time they arrived, the police marksmen decided to take no chances and despatched five bullets into him. Firemen then had to lever the dead cats jaws apart in order to free Goagsie's head.

Goagsie survived, but due to the head injuries sustained in the tigers attack was never the same again. Compensation-seeking relatives claimed that one of the police bullets had struck him, but this was dismissed after a full medica examination. Old friends would be dismayed as they saw him feeding the ducks at Inverleith pond, drooling and talking to himself. He was lifted for exposing himself to school-children and the arresting officers found themselves surprisingly moved to see the big gangster reduced to tears of frustration. Mona left him for an associate of his, who was heavily involved in the ill-fated Scotland-Ireland 2008 bid.
He now has little contact with the outside world, mostly passing time by watching videos and playing computer games. One exception is Doreen, who occasionally calls over with some home made soup in a Tupperware bowl.